



NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Northern Arizona University's 2007 Graduating Senior Survey Report: Trends in Satisfaction for Graduating Seniors

Introduction

- For the past ten years (AY1998-2007), a survey of graduating seniors has been conducted at Northern Arizona University (NAU). This survey assesses student satisfaction and opinions about their experience at the university, while also addressing specific questions that are asked by the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) for the Undergraduate Consolidated Accountability Report (UCAR) each year. In this report, the results from questions that have consistently been included in the Graduating Senior Survey are summarized in order to study trends in satisfaction during the ten years this study has been completed.

Methods¹

- The 2007 administration of the Graduating Senior Survey was the third time this survey was administered via the web. In 2005 the survey was sent via an email to all students that had applied for graduation with the Registrar's Office between November 2004 and June 2005. In 2006 and 2007 the survey was sent via an email to all students that had applied for graduation with the Registrar's Office between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007 (fiscal year 2007). In the past the Graduating Senior Survey was a phone survey that was administered by the Social Research Laboratory to approximately 400 students expecting to graduate in the Fall, Spring, or Summer of the survey administration's academic year. For the 2007 administration, 939 students participated. This sample size yields an error rate below ± 3 percent². The survey sample was similar to the overall population of seniors on most characteristics examined. Table A (in Appendix A) shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to all students that applied for graduation.

Summary of Results

The 2007 administration of the Graduating Senior Survey was the second time this survey was administered via the web for a full fiscal year (in 2005 the survey was open for seven months). It is unknown what affect this change in survey administration had on the results.

- Results from the 2007 administration of the Graduating Senior Survey indicate that student satisfaction shows variation across areas assessed. While there is variation in the satisfaction within various content areas over the ten years of study, one consistent finding is a general increase in satisfaction since 1998; most notably in advising at the lower-division level and career goal advising.

¹ Refer to Appendix A for a more complete methodology

² The sampling error describes the probable difference between interviewing everyone in the population versus interviewing a sample drawn from this population. For example, if 80% of the graduating seniors sampled indicated satisfaction in a specific content area, the actual population parameter falls in the range of 77% - 83% (80% +/- 3%) satisfaction

- Overall satisfaction with NAU continues to be the highest rated and most consistently rated content area. For the 2007 administration, 96% of respondents indicated satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied) with their overall experience at NAU. Satisfaction with the faculty at NAU also continues to be high with 92% of the respondents reporting that they were satisfied with the quality of faculty instruction.

Trend Study from 1998 – 2007

With the completion of the 2007 survey administration, the Graduating Senior Survey has been completed for ten consecutive years. Due to changes in the survey questions during this ten year period, only six content areas are available for a historical comparison³. These six areas are: (1) faculty/quality of instruction, (2) lower-division academic advising, (3) major academic advising, (4) career goals advising, (5) preparation for a career in the chosen field, and (6) overall experience rating. Table 1 below presents the satisfaction levels by year for the six areas.

Table 1. Satisfaction by year for each content area (1998-2007)

Content Area	Percentage of Satisfied Respondents									
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005 [^]	2006	2007
NAU Faculty/Quality of Instruction	89%	90%	87%	85%	92%	95%	97%	91%	92%	92%
Academic Advising: Lower-Division	52%	51%	78%	73%	59%	64%	80%*	73%	75%	72%
Academic Advising: Major	78%	77%	80%	74%	69%	78%	80%	72%	72%	75%
Advising: Career Goals	49%	60%	78%	75%	69%	72%	75%	62%	64%	66%
Preparation For a Career	80%	82%	79%	77%	84%	86%	89%	82%	85%	84%
Overall Experience	98%	97%	97%	96%	96%	97%	98%	95%	96%	96%

³ It should be noted that this is a rather rough trend comparison, since the wording and response choices for some questions have changed over the years. The four that have remained stable over the seven years are the three advising areas and the overall experience rating. The other two questions, however, have response categories that shifted from stating the level of satisfaction (“Poor” to “Excellent”) to rating a student’s satisfaction (“Very Dissatisfied” to “Very Satisfied”). In addition, the question from previous years assessing satisfaction with “NAU faculty” has been changed to satisfaction with “the quality of faculty instruction.” These changes to the questions began with the 2002 administration.

*In regards to the advising questions, it should be noted that beginning with the 2004 administration, students were first asked if they received lower division academic advising prior to declaring a major. Only those students that answered in the affirmative were asked to evaluate their level of satisfaction with lower-division advising. For example, the 72% satisfied for 2007 is based on 441 out of a possible 709 respondents as 441 indicated they had received lower division advising at NAU prior to declaring a major.

[^] 2005 was the first year that the Graduating Senior Survey was administered via the web. It is not known how the change in administration may have affected the results.

Figure 1. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the content area of NAU faculty/quality of instruction (1998-2007)

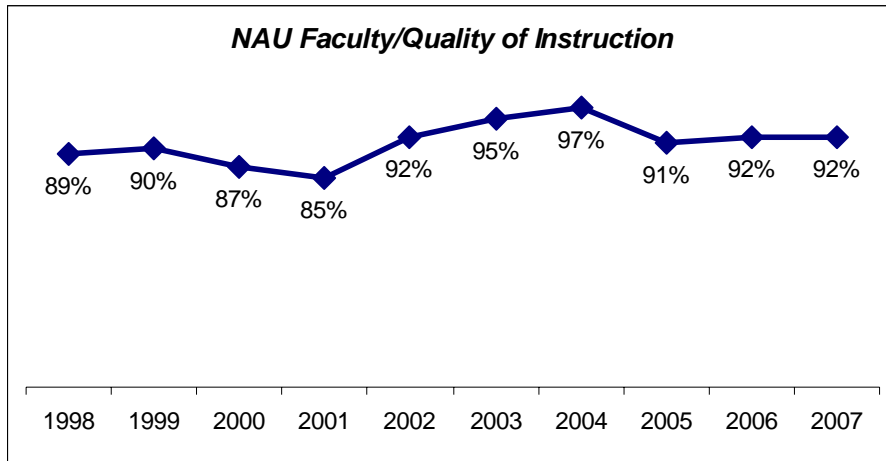


Figure 2. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing lower-division academic advising (1998-2007)

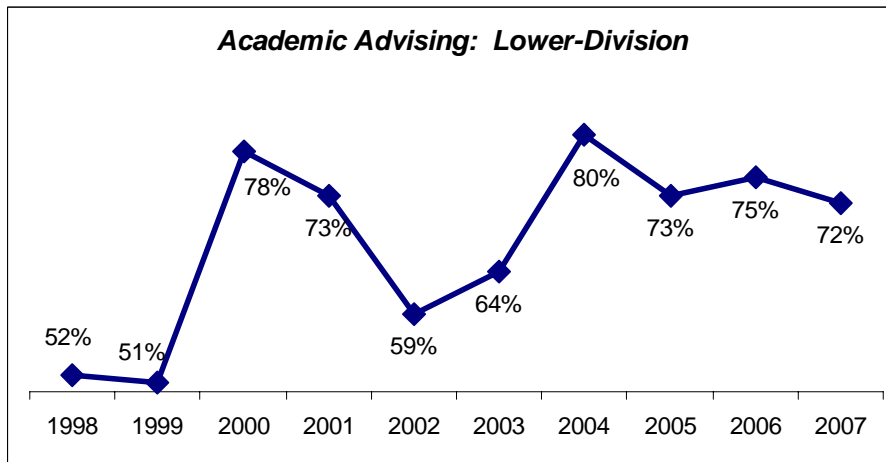


Figure 3. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing major academic advising (1998-2007)

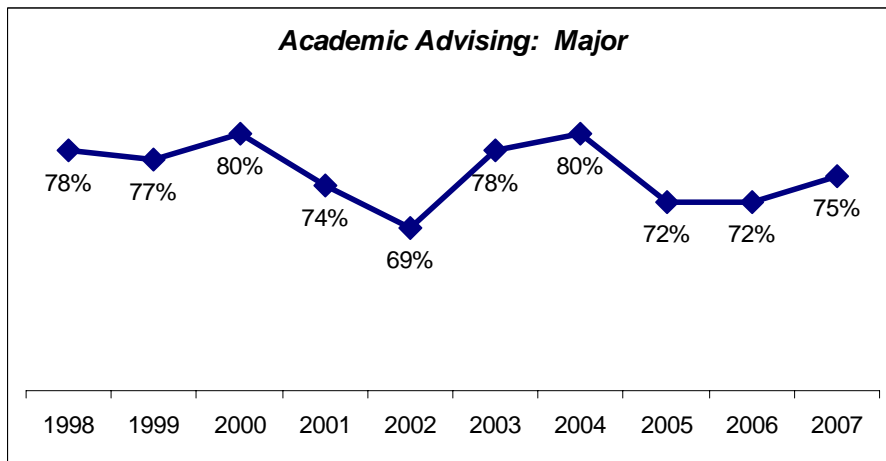


Figure 4. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing career goals advising (1998-2007)

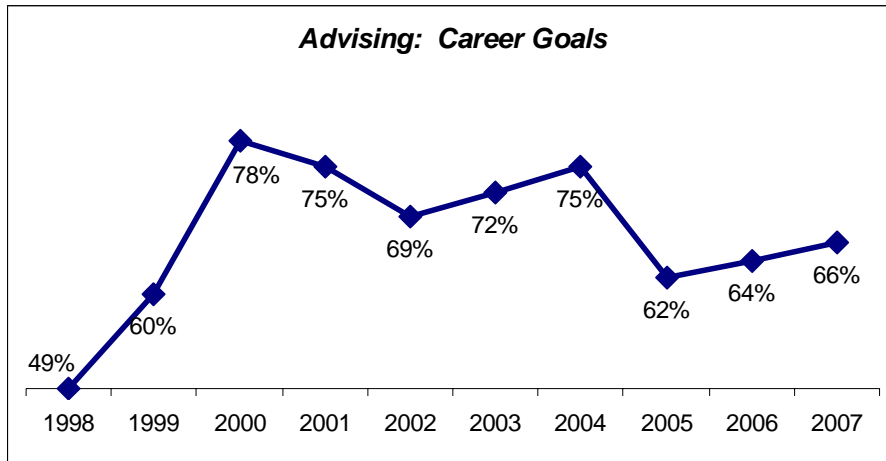


Figure 5. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in satisfaction for the question addressing preparation for a career in the chosen field (1998-2007)

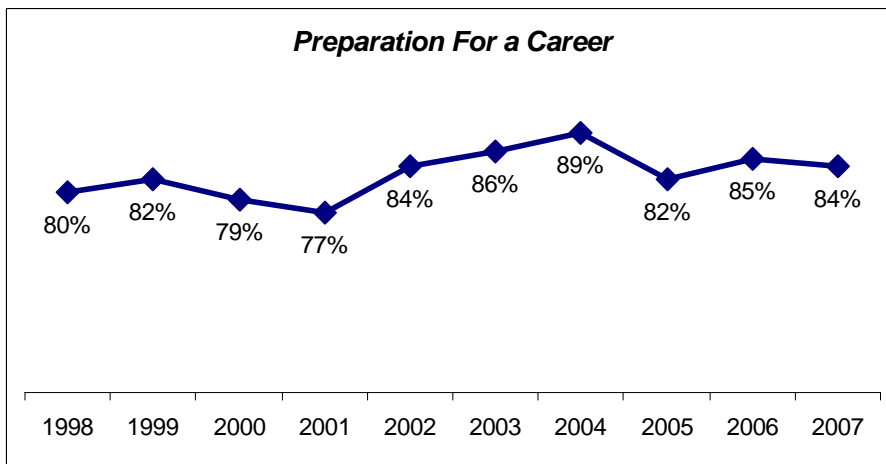
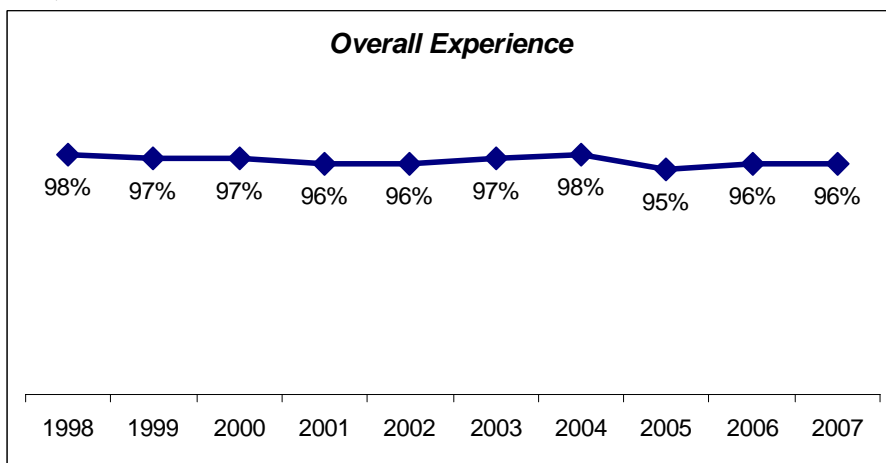


Figure 6. Percent of Satisfied Respondents: Trends in ratings of overall experience at NAU (1998-2007)



Appendix A: Methodology

This report summarizes the most recent administration of the Graduating Senior Survey. The survey assesses the satisfaction and opinions of NAU's graduating seniors and provides data that is reported to ABOR for their annual accountability report.

The survey consisted of 47 multiple-choice and open-ended questions administered via a web survey. Questions addressed satisfaction in key areas, development of certain essential skills, and opinions about the university environment. The survey instrument is available by request to Eva.Hatchner@nau.edu. The survey was administered via a web survey designed by the Office of Planning, Budget, and Institutional Research to all students that had applied for registration during fiscal year 2007 (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007).

It is important to note that response categories are dichotomized to represent satisfaction versus dissatisfaction. For example, students were asked "How satisfied have you been with the quality of faculty instruction in general – very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied?" For the purpose of this analysis, these possible response categories were subsequently recoded as dissatisfied, which includes the original categories of "very dissatisfied" and "dissatisfied", and satisfied, which includes the original categories of "satisfied" and "very satisfied".

The survey sample was similar to the overall population of graduating seniors on most characteristics examined. Table A shows the background characteristics of the survey sample compared to the overall graduating senior population at NAU. As is common in survey research, females tended to be overrepresented as survey respondents, whereas males tend to be underrepresented. It is unclear how, if at all, these discrepancies in the sample population affect the overall results of this study.

Table A. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents compared to all students that applied for graduation

	Survey Respondents	All Students that Graduated in FY2007
College		
Arts and Letters	13%	12%
Business Administration	13%	13%
Consortium of Professional Schools	12%	16%
Education	20%	19%
Engineering & Natural Sciences	14%	14%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	29%	27%
Campus		
Flagstaff	71%	72%
Online	11%	9%
Statewide	14%	14%
Yuma	3%	5%
AZ Resident	85%	85%

	Survey Respondents	All Students that Graduated in FY2007
Female	70%	64%
Ethnicity*		
African American	2%	2%
Native American	6%	7%
Asian American	1%	2%
Hispanic / Latino	10%	12%
International	1%	1%
Caucasian	79%	75%
Unknown	2%	3%
CUM NAU GPA	3.41	3.32
	Group Size	
	939	2,664

*Column % does not add to 100 due to rounding